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**Testimony submitted by  
James W. Kohlmoos, President, Knowledge Alliance**

**To  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations United States  
House of Representatives**

**Regarding  
FY 2011 appropriations for the U.S. Department of Education**

**May 12, 2010**

#### **Summary**

Since the release of the Nation at Risk report more than 25 years ago, educational improvement has been a top priority for U.S. policymakers, educational leaders, entrepreneurs, foundations, and practitioners. Yet the pace of improvement in school districts has been incremental at best, and by many measures, educational outcomes in the United States have slipped in comparison with other countries.<sup>1</sup>

In fields such as medicine, defense, agriculture, and technology, large and vibrant research, development, and dissemination (RD&D) infrastructures serve as the leading catalysts for problem solving and innovation. In education, however, the RD&D enterprise is neither of the size nor scope to sustain and scale the kind of innovative, transformational change needed by our school systems to address current and future learning needs. As a result, education reform efforts at the local, state and national levels suffer from a pervasive capacity crisis where the urgent need for research-based solutions to critical educational problems far surpasses the supply of useable knowledge and relevant expertise.

Knowledge Alliance recommends significantly increasing investments in education's RD&D infrastructure and the development and implementation of innovative research-based solutions. Our recommended investments in six interrelated programs at the US Department of Education will help develop a robust capacity at the state and local levels to solve education's most persistent problems of practice and policy.

With America's future competitiveness at stake, the time has come to unleash America's ingenuity to solve our most pressing education problems, deliver break-the-mold solutions to our schools, and guide a new knowledge and innovation revolution in teaching and learning.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD, *PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World* (Paris: 2007).

## Testimony

On behalf of Knowledge Alliance, I am pleased to submit this testimony to the subcommittee regarding our recommendations for the FY 2011 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill as they relate to the US Department of Education.

Knowledge Alliance is a non-profit, non-partisan coalition dedicated to the effective use of research-based knowledge in shaping policy and practice in K-12 education. We are a strong and dynamic community of successful education organizations and agencies, all of which are constantly looking for new and better ways to support high-quality education research, development, dissemination, technical assistance and evaluation at all levels. We believe that the effective creation, translation and application of research-based knowledge can significantly accelerate and bring to scale nationwide efforts to improve academic performance and close achievement gaps for all students.

## Critical Challenges

**A nation still at risk** --- Since the release of the Nation at Risk report more than 25 years ago, educational improvement has been a top priority for U.S. policymakers, educational leaders, entrepreneurs, foundations, and practitioners. Yet the pace of improvement in school districts has been incremental at best, and by many measures, educational outcomes in the United States have slipped in comparison with other countries.

In fields such as medicine, defense, agriculture, and technology, large and vibrant research, development, and dissemination (RD&D) infrastructures serve as the leading catalysts for problem solving and innovation. In education, however, the RD&D enterprise is neither of the size nor scope to sustain and scale the kind of innovative, improvements needed by our school systems to address current and future learning needs. As a result, education reform efforts at the local, state and national levels suffer from a pervasive capacity crisis where the urgent need for research-based solutions to critical educational problems far surpasses the supply of useable knowledge and relevant expertise.

**Seriously deficient investments in education research and development** – The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) promotes the use of instructional practices and innovations supported by research, but the Department of Education spends less than one percent of its budget on research, development and statistics, one of the smallest of any cabinet level agency. ([American Association for the Advancement of Science](#))

Federal department/agency	FY 2011 research and development request (in millions of dollars)
<a href="#">Defense</a>	78,048
<a href="#">Health and Human Services</a>	32,152
<a href="#">NASA</a>	10,986

<a href="#">Energy</a>	11,219
<a href="#">National Science Foundation</a>	5,547
<a href="#">Agriculture</a>	2,448
<a href="#">Commerce</a>	1,716
<a href="#">Veterans Affairs</a>	1,180
<a href="#">Homeland Security</a>	1,046
<a href="#">Transportation</a>	901
<a href="#">Interior</a>	772
<a href="#">Environmental Protection Agency</a>	606
<b><a href="#">Education</a></b>	<b>383</b>

This low level of investment means that education is ill equipped to rapidly develop, deliver and scale innovations as is done in other sectors through R&D. The bottom line is that schools and students will suffer without an increased investment in developing and testing research-based practices.

**Rapidly expanding capacity crisis** –According to a recent Center on Education Policy report, about one-third of U.S. public schools did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2008-2009. In nine states and the District of Columbia, at least half the public schools did not make AYP and in a majority of the states (35 including D.C.), at least one-fourth of the schools did not make AYP. States and districts currently lack the sufficient resources, staff and expertise to address the growing demand to support low performing schools. This capacity crisis only exacerbates the complex challenges of transforming low performing schools and preparing all schools for the next generation of learning.

**Urgent need for solutions** -- Federal education policy has evolved in phases over the past 15 years. The focus on standards and assessments in the late 1980s and early 1990s spawned major attention on the alignment of standards, curriculum and assessments in the 1990s, which played a role in the current emphasis on accountability. The next logical step in this standards-based continuum is a more comprehensive and vigorous focus on solutions by providing significant new resources and expertise for turning around low performing schools and building the capacity for sustained improvement.

## **Recommendations**

Our appropriations proposal for FY 2011 calls for greater federal investments in research-based programs to help states and districts respond to the rapidly increasing needs. We urge a stronger and more comprehensive federal effort to respond both to the greater demand for knowledge-based solutions and to the under-funded supply of well-tested practices and programs.

## **Top priority: A Knowledge, Innovation and Improvement Package**

We urge you to consider six essential and interrelated programs as a knowledge-innovation- improvement package:

**Comprehensive Centers** *\$67.3M (\$10 M increase over President's request)* Our recommendation includes an increase of \$500 thousand, or 20%, of additional funding for each Comprehensive Center which would: 1) enable the 16 regional centers to expand their capacity building work with SEAs in such areas as resource allocation, data use, teacher effectiveness and school improvement; 2) support the five content centers' school improvement efforts in providing in-depth, specialized support in five key areas (assessment and accountability, instruction, teacher quality, innovation and improvement and high schools); 3) help states sustain their one-time ARRA school improvement efforts.

**Regional Educational Laboratories** *\$80.6M (\$10M increase over President's request)* Our proposed increase would: 1) expand a special triage "urgent response" system to address the most pressing, immediate educational reform issues in each region; 2) focus more attention on development and dissemination initiatives; 3) further support the crucial initiatives that are being implemented via the ARRA.

**Research, Development & Dissemination** *\$261M (same as the President's request)* Our recommendation would allow funding 1) for more rigorous research projects under existing programs in areas where the knowledge of learning and instruction is inadequate; 2) for new grants to support impact evaluations at the State and district level of the ARRA.

**School Turnaround Grants** *\$900M (same as the President's request)* The \$354.4 million increase requested for the School Turnaround Grants (currently School Improvement Grants) would help build State and local capacity to identify and implement effective interventions to turn around their lowest-performing schools. The proposed increase would create a sustainable base for long-term school improvement efforts.

**Investing in Innovation Fund** *\$500M (same as the President's request)* Our proposal would support a newly authorized ESEA program, modeled after the Investing in Innovation program in the ARRA and provide a substantial federal investment for scaling and sustaining evidence-based innovations. The proposal is a bold step in the right direction in building from and on a knowledge base for reform.

**Race to the Top** *\$1.35B (same as the President's request)* The request would support a newly authorized ESEA program, modeled after the Race to the Top program in the ARRA. The program would create incentives for comprehensive State and local reforms for improving student achievement and close the achievement gaps. The program would also encourage the broad identification, dissemination, and use of effective policies and practices.

## **Important Support: Programs Contributing to Innovation and Improvement**

We recommend continued support for the following programs which will play an increasingly significant role in state and local improvement efforts.

- 21st Century Learning Centers
- Education for Homeless Children
- English Language Acquisition
- Even Start
- High School Graduation Initiative
- Improving Teacher Quality State
- Math Science Partnerships (ED)
- National Center Ed Statistics
- Parental Information. & Resource Centers
- Smaller Learning Communities
- Special Ed Research & Evaluation
- Statewide Data Systems
- Striving Readers
- Technology State Grants

## **Working Examples**

**Regional Educational Laboratories ---** In 2005 the Regional Educational Laboratory – Central (McREL) supported the creation of “Balanced Leadership,” a three-year leadership development program using McREL research on effective school leaders. The research identified 21 responsibilities of principals that positively correlate with higher levels of school performance. Since its creation in 2006, more than 13,000 school principals nationwide have benefited from the program. Currently, the program is the subject of a major, IES-supported, randomized control trial being conducted in Michigan by Roger Goddard, a Texas A&M University researcher. Results from the study are expected in 2011.

**Comprehensive Assistance Centers** –Since 2007, the Mississippi Department of Education has received technical assistance support from the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SEDL) to address issues related to the over-identification of minority students for special education and the performance of students with disabilities on statewide assessments. SEDL partnered with the Southeast Equity Assistance Center and the Southeast Regional Resource Center to develop and implement statewide plans for response to intervention strategies (RTI) in Mississippi schools. Through this critical support the state has experienced 20% drops both in the total number of students identified with specific learning disabilities (SLD) and in the number of African-American students identified with SLD.

**National Research and Development Centers --**Two new studies from UCLA’s National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) have found that leadership and staff quality are the key factors in high quality afterschool programs. Researchers reported that the 53 high quality programs had overall positive effects on the day school program, including increased student effort and greater class

participation. The results were based on an evaluation of the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC). Study selection was from approximately 9000 CCLC afterschool programs and based on specific criteria set by a National Afterschool Partnership research partnership, coordinated by SEDL.

### **Unleashing America's Ingenuity**

In total, we believe it has never been more important to expand the federally supported knowledge-innovation- improvement infrastructure and to deliver research-based solutions to schools with the greatest needs to improve. Congress is uniquely positioned to build on past efforts and lead us into a new era of innovation and transformation of our public school system.

Indeed now is the time to unleash America's ingenuity to solve our most pressing education problems, deliver break-the-mold solutions to our schools, and guide a new knowledge and innovation revolution in teaching and learning.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
and Related Agencies**

**Witness Disclosure Form**

Clause 2(g) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires non-governmental witnesses to disclose to the Committee the following information. A non-governmental witness is any witness appearing on behalf of himself/herself or on behalf of an organization other than a federal agency, or a state, local or tribal government.

Your Name, Business Address, and Telephone Number:

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1. Are you appearing on behalf of yourself or a non-governmental organization? Please list organization(s) you are representing.

**I am testifying on behalf of Knowledge Alliance, a non-governmental organization**

2. Have you or any organization you are representing received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants or subcontracts) since October 1, 2007?

**No**

3. If your response to question #2 is "Yes", please list the amount and source (by agency and program) of each grant or contract, and indicate whether the recipient of such grant or contract was you or the organization(s) you are representing.

Signature:



Date: May 12, 2010

Please attach a copy of this form, along with your curriculum vitae (resume) to your written testimony.

## **James W. Kohlmoos**

Jim Kohlmoos is the President and CEO of Knowledge Alliance, a non partisan non profit trade association in Washington DC dedicated to the effective use of research-based knowledge in education policy and practice. With three decades of experience in educational leadership and innovation in both the public and private sectors, Kohlmoos is charged with leading a national advocacy effort to expand support for evidence-based education and innovative, knowledge-based solutions in school improvement.

Prior to joining the Alliance in 2001, Kohlmoos was a vice president of Implementation Group, where over a two- year period as vice president he built an extensive bi-partisan government relations practice in elementary and secondary education. From 1993 to 2000 Kohlmoos served at the U.S. Department of Education as both a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education and as a Senior Adviser and Special Assistant. He also served on the Presidential Transition Team in 1992. From 1977 to 1993, he worked at the Close Up Foundation first as an instructor and director and then as vice president.

Kohlmoos began his professional career in education 1971 with the U.S. Teacher Corps in Salinas, CA. He subsequently served as a teacher trainer with the Peace Corps, which took him to Malaysia for three years.

Kohlmoos holds a baccalaureate in history from Stanford University (1971), plus teacher credentials from the University of California. He has completed graduate courses at Johns Hopkins University, George Washington University, and the University of California at Santa Cruz. A native of California, Kohlmoos has two adult children and resides in Arlington, VA, with his wife.